

THE MOTIF OF THE BIRD IN ARMENIAN EPIC LITERATURE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH IRANIAN TRADITION

Francine Mawet

Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)

Traditionally Arm. hawat(k') 'faith, believe' is related to the word for bird Arm. haw, Lat. avis, Umbr. auif, auief 'bird, presage,' Ved., Av. vi-, Gr. οἰωνός, αἰετός 'eagle, presage'.¹ The semantic development from 'bird, presage' to 'faith believe' which is implicit in this etymology rests on a mythic representation, attested in Greek, Latin, Indian and especially Avestan traditions. The bird (always a big and lonely bird: an eagle or falcon) is the intermediary between men and gods in the process of reciprocity, of do ut des, which is established between them, the god being pledged to a gift (fides) in return for the prayers or the offerings of the faithful. This divine favor may consist of material richness, welfare, moral protection, superiority or ardor in war.² A few examples of this motif are attested in the remnants of Armenian epic, principally in the fragments given by Movsēs Xorenac'i.³ But this motif seems to have lost its specific mythic character, inherited from Indo-European, and appears to be only a vestige of a legend. We intend to show how this bird-motif evolved in Iran up to the Middle-Iranian period and how this reshuffled version from Pahlavi literature seems to have been borrowed into Armenian literature.

In the Avesta, the bird (or any part of the bird) has the power of giving the faithful xvar nah, divine favor (yana), strength and superiority before enemies as well as material wealth and health. This is amply attested in the passage of the Avesta⁴ in which the xvarənah of Yima escapes in the form of a bird vāraŋna 'falcon,' when Yima commits the sin of lying. The warlike god Vərəθraŋna himself either appears personified in the form

T. Samuelian & M. Stone, eds. Medieval Armenian Culture. (University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 6). Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983. pp. 179 to 193.

a bird vāryna⁵ or is compared with saēna 'the eagle' when he surrounds the faithful's house with xvarənah and wealth of cows (gaosurābiiō).⁶ The karšipta bird ('the falcon?') propagates Mazdaism on the Yima's var.⁷ It is in the shape of a bird that the frauuasīs honored by the righteous help him.⁸ Finally, the tree of the eagle (saēna) grants remedies (ərəδβē.biš 'having highest remedies,' vispō.biš 'having all remedies').⁹

In each of these examples we have a very accurate and coherent representation of the bird acting as an intermediary in the relations between men and gods and not merely as a miraculous appearance. Although Old-Iranian the shape of the bird is only the external appearance under which the xvarənah comes to light, this association of the xvarənah with the bird is an important point in the further evolution of this motif, as we shall see. Perhaps it is not out of place to mention again the debate about the significance of xvarənah in Avestan. One passage of the Avesta¹⁰ in particular enables us to give a more accurate definition of it.¹¹ In that passage xvarənah is closely linked to the notion of both wealth and light; it manifests itself thanks to the light of the sun; indeed when the sun warms up, the divinities gather together the xvarənah in order to distribute it on earth. On the other hand, it is itself the basis of wealth. Thus in Old-Iranian there are two distinct notions which join together in some contexts and which directly depend on religious concepts: the bird, in the mutual relations between gods and the faithful, is one of the shapes under which xvarənah appears; xvarənah is itself one of the manifestations of divine goodwill: It is closely connected to light, and it secures the welfare of the righteous (ašahe gaēdē). As we shall see, this connection develops markedly during the Middle-Iranian period, the bird being merely a miraculous sign and xvarənah becoming the 'royal glory,' i.e. the mark of sovereignty. Failure to distinguish clearly between the various chronological stages in the use of this term account for the confusion.

ARMENIAN CONTEXT

Before going on with the examination of Middle-Iranian data, let us have a look at the Armenian records which we shall be able to examine further in the light of Pahlavi tradition.

What remains of the Armenian epic is but a fraction of what it must have been. Many explanations may be put forward for its near disappearance.

First among them is the importance of Christian literature. But the Armenian authors' fastidiousness toward the fabulous pagan motifs certainly took its toll. The apparent concern for verisimilitude that Movses Xorenac'i expressed, often with considerable insistence, is an example of this attitude:

k'anzi anteli ē mez ayžm erkrordel zařaspelsn yařags erazoyn
p'ap'agoy . . . ayl mek' asasc'uk' miayn zstoygn, or inč'
čřmartut'eann vayełē patmut'iwn 'As it is not advisable for us
 now to repeat the fables about P'ap'ag's dream' . . . but we
 shall only tell the truth, all that belongs to the true history.'¹²

Child protected by a bird:

The first and most important type of context, is one in which a child is protected and saved by a bird.

About Artařēs' birth:

na ew aycin diec'umn mankann řnd hovaneaw arcuoyñ, ew
guřakumn agřawun, ew gerapancin pahpanut'iwn ařiwun hanterj
arbanekut'eamb gaylun 'and this, the goat's suckling of the child
 under the protection of the eagle and the presage of the crow
 and the warding of the illustrious lion with the service of the
 wolf.'¹³

The motif of an animal's suckling of a child belongs to I.-E. legends (Romulus and Remus suckled by the she-wolf).¹⁴ As for the wondrous reference to the eagle protecting the baby, it is, as we shall see, probably the distortion of a properly Iranian myth.

Some pseudo-etymological explanations are given to the names of various of Vařarřak's officers. So the Arcruni are those who carry the eagles before Vařarřak (*arciw-uni).¹⁵ In connection with this etymology a reference is made to fables published at Hadamakert. One of those is the following:

mankan nirheloy anjrew ew arew hakařakeal ew hovani t'řč'noy
patanwoyn t'alkac'eloy 'the rain and the sun were tormenting a
 sleeping boy. The protection of the youth fallen down in a faint
 was assumed by the bird.'¹⁶

Although less obvious, another passage can be explained in the same way as the previous ones. The name of Sanatrak is decomposed by Movsēs Xorenac'i into Sanot, the name of a nurse, and turk' "gift."¹⁷ On this etymology, it is related that during a journey in winter in Armenia, Abgar's

sister, Awte, was caught in a snow-storm. The prince's nurse saved the child, keeping him on her breast under the snow for three days and three nights and a marvelous animal protected the child. About this animal, Movsēs Xorenac'i says:

zormē araspelabanen, et'ē kendani imn norahraš spitak yas-
tuacoc'n atak'eal pahēr zmanukn. bayc' orc'ap' etak' verahasu,
ayspēs ē: šun spitak ēnd xndraksn leal, pataheac' mankann ew
dayekin. 'about him (Sanatruk) they tell the following fable: a
marvelous white animal, sent by the gods, protected the child,
but as far as we have understood, it happened like this: a white
dog, among those who were searching for the child and the
nurse, discovered both of them.'¹⁸

The last sentence, as it seems to us, is only a rationalization of the miraculous phenomenon which has been previously told. Indeed, the marvelous, white (spitak) animal would be a bird. Spitak, as it is known, has been borrowed from Iranian: M.-Ir. spētak, spēt, from a root indicating the brilliant whiteness, the light.¹⁹ Let us remember that the I.-Ir. name of the 'eagle,' Skr. rjipyā-, Av. ərəzifiia-, O.-P. *ardufya- or *rdufya-²⁰ is connected with a root meaning 'brilliant, white' and 'swift' together (Gr. ἀργυκέραινος 'with bright lightning,' ἀργίποδας κύνας 'swift dogs,' HSCH. ἀργός· λευκός, ταχύς Av. ərəzifiia. parəna-, Skr. rjra- 'swift, brilliant,' epithet of an arrow, probably involving a comparison between the swiftness of the arrow and that of the eagle).²¹ Arm. spitak could thus evoke a big bird, an eagle, without naming it, by the combination of the swiftness of its flight and the sparkling whiteness of its feathers. The terms yastuacoc'n arak'eal 'sent by the gods' also evoke the formula of the passages already examined in the Avesta, although the reference to divine intervention here is cautious and oblique.

Dreams:

The second type of context involves dreams. In Movsēs Xorenac'i, the Median Ašdahak (Astyage) saw, in a dream, a woman giving birth to three heroes in Armenia. The first one, mounted on a lion, was dashing to the west, the second one, on a leopard, to the north; and the third one, on a dragon, was rushing upon the Median empire. Suddenly the last dashed upwards on wings, fighting fiercely against Ašdahak. This dream portends that the ruin of the Median empire will come from the country of the

Armenian Tigran:

ew yankarc i ver nayec'eal zayn or i veray višapin heceal kayr,
arcuanman slac'eal t'ewawk' tēsi yarjakeal, or mawt haseal
xohēr korcanel zdīs. isk es ašdahak xtroc ēnd mēj ankeal, ew
yis zaynpisi eteal yarjakumn ēnkalay, mart ēnd sk'anč'elwoyn
arnelov diwc'azann 'and suddenly I looked up to this one who
 went mounted on the dragon and who was flying with the wings
 of an eagle, and I saw him attacking and getting nearer,
 intending to throw the gods to the ground. But I myself,
 Ašdahak, in interposing, received such an attack upon myself
 and had to fight against the prodigious hero.²²

In both types of context, the bird has nothing in common with the mythic representation already seen in many I.-E. traditions. It is merely the mark, the external sign of a miraculous event, belonging to the realm of legend; moreover, the religious significance, in particular the notion of reciprocity in the intercourse of devotion, is completely missing in those contexts. Now a similar development can be observed, in Iran, particularly from the Sasanian period on, and the parallelism of evolution can most probably be explained either as an Armenian loan from Middle-Iranian traditions or as their continuation through Armenian culture.

Parallels to this motif are found in Middle-Iranian literature. The theme of the child protected by a bird (always royal children as in Armenian tradition), is used by Aelianus, the Greek author of the second and third centuries AD, who relates to us a legend concerning Achaimenes

Ἀχαιμένην <γε> μὴν τὸν Πέρσῃν, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ κατέλινε ἡ
 τῶν Περσῶν εὐγένεια δετοῦ τροφίμου ἀκοῶν γενέσθαι

'The Persian Achaimenes, to whom the Persian aristocracy goes
 back, was, as I understand, brought up by an eagle.'²³

An identical theme is found in the Šah-Nāme,²⁴ when Zāl, abandoned
 by his father Sam, was carried away to the mountain where the mythic bird,
 Simūrγ roosted, and was brought up by it. It is also thanks to Simūrγ that
 Roubabe gave birth to her very strong child, Rostam.²⁵

Although no trace of child-protector motif has been found in the parts
 of the Avesta which have reached us, this passage from Aelianus provides
 evidence of an ancient association of this theme with Achaimenes.

The motif of the bird attending a princely birth, belongs to what G.

Widengren called the royal legend of Iran.²⁶ The set of circumstances surrounding the king's birth and childhood are the sign of his peculiar character: light, presages and miraculous visions occurring at his birth, his education among animals and shepherds and the revelation of his royal descent thanks to the nobleness of his behavior, and so on. This tradition persisted in Iran, from antiquity, with Zoroaster's legend, the Zaratuštnāmak, and the Pahlavi Zand i Vahman Yašt, which itself arises from the lost Avestan Vahman Yašt,²⁷ up to the Šāh-Nāme, through such Middle-Iranian works as the Kārnāmak i Artašir i Pāpākān and similar Armenian traditions. The persistence of Old-Iranian myths even up to Islamic times has been pointed out by A. Christensen

This theme ought certainly to be related to the illustrious births and nursing of children by animals common in Indo-European mythology. It seems to us that the references to an eagle (or another big bird), have a special origin in Iranian tradition. As we have seen, the eagle is one of the Iranian representations of xvarənah, which itself seems to have a particular affinity with the first function, the royal and sovereign one. In spite of Yima's myth in which his xvarənah was recovered by representatives of the three functions, Miθra, Ortaona and Kərəsāspa, successively. It was Miθra, who first recovered the xvarənah. Moreover, the fire farnbāg (or Ātur Xvarr) belongs to the priests. In the interpretation of Papak's dream, Ātur farnbāg is the great men's religious knowledge: u ātur farnbāy dēn dānātīk i mas martān i moγ-martān u ātur gušnasp artēštar u spāhpatān u ātur burzīn mihr vāstryōšān u varz-kartārān i gēhān 'and the fire farnbāg is the science of the higher men and the magi, and the fire gušnasp is the warrior and the army-chief, and the fire burzīn mihr is the peasants and the cultivators of the world.'²⁸

A clear confirmation of the close connections among xvarənah, the eagle and the royal being in Middle-Iranian literature is given in the Dēnkart's²⁹ account of Zoroaster's creation. Zoroaster was created thanks to Vahman and Ašvahišt's Hōm which was set down in the nest of two birds and was gathered by Purušāsp, Zoroaster's father. Besides the relation between the preacher and the birds, we find here once again the Avestan connection between birds and haoma. For instance:

10 aruuantəm ezi dāmišatəm bayō nidaəat huuāpā haraiiio paiti
barəzaiiā

11 āat epā aora spənta fradaxšta mərəya vižuuənca vībarən auui

škata upāiri. saēna. . .

'Thou valiant, wise, a god well-doing set you down (haoma) on the height of haraiti and from there, beneficent learned birds, flying over and over, brought you on the škata upāiri. saēna (= which is over the eagle').³⁰

In the Dēnkart the story follows thus:³¹

ō hān i ōyšan mānišn apar šūt hend vahuman ašvahišt u hān murv hampursīt hend kū: franāmišn amāh hač-mān hān hōm xvādišn

'Vahuman and Ašvahišt came down in their nest and said to the birds: We are ordered to go and ask this hom.'³²

The hōm passed from Purušāsp and his wife's bodies to Zaratustra's. While drinking hōm with milk, the parents created Zaratustra, who was formed from the union of his xvarrah, his fravahr and his substance.³³

So the eagle, the sign of the xvarənah and of the royal person of the king or the preacher, would also be the mark of his special place in the first function. The ancient association between the shape of the bird and the royal person gives proof in itself for the origin of this theme of royal birth under the protection of the bird.³⁴ It should be noted that, according to this hypothesis, the rescue of Yima's xvarənah by representatives of the three functions would agree with the first function and the two others riding one on top of the other, just as in Miθra's complex character.

Miraculous appearances of birds are also able to save kings. The Kārnāmak i Artāšir i Pāpākān³⁵ tells us Artāšir's story who was nearly poisoned by his wife, Ardavan's daughter. Just when Artāšir grasps the poisoned cup, the fire farnbāg, appearing in the form of an eagle, casts it away and saves the king.

Taxmoruv descends from the Avestan hero, Taxma Urupi, who during his 30 years reign subdued devils and men and mounted Aora Mainiiu changed into a horse.³⁶ In Mīrxond,³⁷ a Persian author from the fifteenth century, Taxmōruv was taken away by the fabulous bird Simūrī to the land of the devils, to the Ğinnistān, and received a few feathers of the bird for protection. This protecting function of the feathers of the bird goes back to the Avestan period.³⁸ In the Šāh-Nāme, when Kavous intended to conquer the sky, he rose up to the skies on a throne carried by four eagles.³⁹ A more or less identical representation is to be found in St. Gregory's vision,⁴⁰ in the shape of the big and awful man who flies down from the sky as an eagle.⁴¹

ew mi ahawor tesil mardoy barjr ew aheł, or zařajn unēr ew
zēřsn i verust minč'ew i xonarh afařapah yařařeal . . ew ink'n
slac'sal xoyac'eal gayr ēst nmanut'ean aragat'ew arcuoy
 'and there was the frightful vision of a big and dreadful man
 who goes on ahead and comes down from upon to below, leading
 the advanced guard . . . and himself flying away, whipping off,
 was coming alike to a fleet-winged eagle.'

It is Simūrj which tends Rostam and his mount Raxš after the duel between Esfandiyār and Rostam.⁴² The healing function of the bird is already attested, as we saw, in the *Avesta*.⁴³ Finally we ought to remember that, following the *Bundahišn*,⁴⁴ the eagle was the first created bird, which shows the mythic importance ascribed to this bird. A reshuffled version of this tradition appears in Eznik's *De Deo*.⁴⁵ It is told that Ahriman, not wishing to create a good being, created the peacock:

ard zinč' paycařagoyñ k'an zloys kayc'ē orum Arhmnn hnaragiwt
elew, kam zinč' geřec'kagoyñ k'an zřiramarg zor ař i c'uc'-
aneloy zgeřec'kagorcut'iwnn arar.

'But what can be more shining than light, of which Ahriman was inventor, or what more beautiful than the peacock, which he made in order to demonstrate his ability to create beautiful things?'⁴⁶

There is thus a noteworthy continuity, within the Iranian tradition beginning in Avestan times, concerning the representation of the bird. Nevertheless, the function of this representation has completely changed in Pahlavi texts: the religious context, with reference to a divinity, the notions of reciprocity and pledging in the intercourse of men and gods have completely vanished. The bird has lost its mythic function, but remains nonetheless merely a miraculous sign. Accordingly, there was a shift from myth to legend. This same evolution is just what is involved in the transformation of the royal legend, as described by A. Christensen.⁴⁷ A new stage takes form in the legendary history of Iran from Sasanian times on. A national tradition takes shape beside the religious one. It is a national tradition in which eschatological notions and certain religious legends have faded. The myths, for instance, are rationalized in comparison with the Avestan *nařks*. This transformation might have taken place beginning with the great royal chronicle, the *Xvařdyānāmař*, the source of the *Šāh-Nāmeħ*. Now, as can be seen, the Armenian examples of this theme agree with this

miraculous, extraordinary vision of the bird, typical of Middle-Iranian texts.

In the beginning of this paper, we emphasized the relation between the Avestan notion of xvarənah and light. Now, the representation of light in Armenian and Middle-Iranian, according to a recent study of A. Hultgård,⁴⁸ confirms our hypothesis of a thematic continuity from Middle-Iranian to Armenian. In Old-Iranian, there is a natural confluence between the notions of light and wealth. Moreover, light takes on, through its purifying value, an eschatological connotation in the designation of paradise (anafra raocā) and in the association of light with good and darkness with evil and the abode of the daēvas—an association which was transformed into doctrine in the course of the development of Mazdaism. But nowhere in the Avesta do we observe the representation of light as the miraculous sign of a royal or divine revelation.⁴⁹ Even when the light is associated with the description of a divinity (Anāhitā, for instance),⁵⁰ it is always in connection with notions of wealth, health, youth or beauty, and indirectly to the notion of justice. In ancient Iran, Miθra is the only divine personage portrayed as luminous (huuā. raoxšnō 'having his own light')⁵¹ and he is compared to the moon; the association of Miθra with the sun is, of course, later than the Avesta. In the later evolution of Iranian religion, the symbolism of light undergoes a special development, in cults such as that of Miθra. Fire itself became the symbol of the divinity.⁵² The Armenian tradition transmits to us a whole symbolism of light which can be most exactly explained through pre-Christian traditions, which themselves have a direct parallel in Pahlavi texts, and show the deep influence of Middle-Iranian religion on pre-Christian Armenia and even later. According to A. Hultgård's analysis,⁵³ notwithstanding its Christian context, the picture of fire or light in St. Gregory's vision displays close connections with the Iranian symbolism of light related to birth or advent of a divine personage or messenger (Miθra, Zarəuštra), of a saviour (Saošiiant), or a king. Some connections can even be dated exactly to Sasanian times, thanks to the testimony of archeology among other things (for instance, the Sasanian fire altars correspond to the description of fire-columns in Agat'angelos).⁵⁴

In our opinion, the motif of the bird in the remnants of Armenian epic literature seems thus to be an accurate testimony of the continuity of literary and religious tradition, from Pahlavi to Armenian, even after the coming of Christianity to Armenia.

NOTES

¹A. Meillet, "Notes sur la déclinaison arménienne," MSL 8 (1892) 165 (= Etudes de linguistique et de philologie arméniennes [ed. M. Mokri; Bibliothèque Arménienne de la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian; Lisbonne, Louvain, 1977] 2. 20); H. Hübschmann, Armenische grammatik (2 ed.; Hildesheim, 1962 Leipzig, 1897) 1. 465, no 236, 237; A. Ernout and A. Meillet, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine (4th ed.; Paris: Klincksieck, 1959) 1. 58; P. Chantraine, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974) 3. 789; R. Solta, Die Stellung der Armenischen im Kreise der indogermanischen Sprachen (Vienna, 1960) 173; J. Pokorny, Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch (Bern, München, 1959-1969) 1.86.

Another etymology has been proposed: the word for 'egg' օճով would be cognate with that for 'bird': H. Schmeja, "Die Verwandtschaftsnamen auf -ως und die Nomina auf -ωνός, -ωνή im Griechischen," IF 68 (1963) 34-36 and "Der Vogel—das eigenborene Wesen," Die Sprache 17 (1971), 180-182; J. Schindler, "Die idg. Wurter für 'Vogel' und 'Ei'," Die Sprache 15 (1969) 144-167. Criticism in R. S. P. Beekes, "H₂O," Die Sprache, 18 (1972) 121, n. 5-6 (օճովός can be easily explained as a thematization of օճով < *ǵ_{owj}-on-). See also Beekes, "The Nominative of the Hysterodynamic Noun Inflection," KZ, 86 (1972) 30-63.

²"Armenien hawat(k') 'foi, croyance'" in AIPHO (forthcoming).

³A survey in Step'anos Tarōnec'i Asoḡik and in Sebēos's Patmut'iwn Hayoc' did not provide any other example of this theme. The main remnants of the Armenian epic literature were gathered by F. Feydit, 'Cahiers de littérature arménienne. 3, L'épopée populaire arménienne,' Pazmavēb 115 (1957) 3-39. See also H. Grégoire, "Héros épiques Méconnus," AIPHO 2 (1934) 1:451-463.

⁴Yt. 19. 34-35.

⁵Yt. 14.19

⁶Yt. 14.41

⁷Y. 2.42

⁸Yt. 13.70

⁹Yt. 12.17

¹⁰Yt. 6.1.

¹¹F. Mawet, "'Light' in ancient Iranian" JIES 10 (1982) 3-4:283-299.

¹²Movses Xorenac'i (ed. LeVaillant de Florival; Venice, 1841), 2.70.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴G. Widengren, Les religions de l'Iran (Transl. L. Jospin; Bibliotheque Historique; Collection Les religions de l'Humanite; Paris: Payot, 1968) 346.

¹⁵See R. W. Thomson's commentary in Moses Khorenats'i History of the Armenians (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 4; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 138, n. 10; Arcui, arcat' is probably directly borrowed from Iranian (Av. arazifiia- and O.-P. *rdifya-): R. Schmitt, "Der 'Adler' im Alten Iran," Die Sprache, 16 (1970) 63-77; R. Schmitt, Dichtung und Dichtersprache in Indogermanischer Sprache (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967) §537; M. Mayrhofer, Aus dem Namenwelt Alt-Irans. Die zentrale Rolle der Namenforschung in der Linguistik des Alt-Iranischen (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 3: Innsbruck, 1971) 6-7; Ch. De Lamberterie, "Armeniaca I-VIII: Études lexicales," BSL 73 (1978) 1:251-262.

¹⁶Movsēs Xorenac'i, 2.7. Movsēs Xorenac'i found his narration about P'ap'ag on Xofohbut's Greek translation of the "History of the first (Kings)," the latter book being written by the so-called Barsum, or Rāstsohun in Iranian. Barsauma is a frequent Syriac name in Sasanian times and there are many known Barsauma. Thomson (note 5, page 217) assumes that this Rāstsohun-Barsuma might be Barsauma of Nisibis, the Nestorian bishop at the Council of Dvin. But the details of Barsauma of Nisibis' life do not fit in with Movsēs' story. The other Barsaumas, Barsauma the monophysite archimandrite (fifth century) and the bishop of Karkā de Laden (seventh century) do not seem to fit either. The important point is that this narration concerns an Iranian king and is typically Iranian. Thomson himself, in his introduction (pages 13-17) points out that the sources given by Movsēs are often not reliable and sometimes simply products of his imagination (for 2. 70, Movsēs probably founds his narration on Agat'angelos, cf. Thomson, Khorenats'i, 16). Moreover, it is not surprising that an Iranian tradition comes to an Armenian author through the Greek translation of a Syriac story. It is also plausible that, following the custom of the time, Barsauma is only the Syriac pseudonym of an Iranian character. In any case, the Persian origin of this fable seems obvious (see also Thomson, Khorenats'i, 16 about Movsēs Xorenac'i, 2. 70) and confirms our following conclusions.

F. Justi, Iranisches Namenbuch (Hildesheim, 1963) (= Marburg, 1895), 172-173, 258; I. Ortiz de Urbina, S.I., Patrologia Syriaca (Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Roma, 1958), 110-111, 133, 187; P. Duval, Anciennes littératures chrétiennes, 2. La littérature syriaque (Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement de l'Histoire Ecclésiastique: Paris, 1899), 345-346, 352, 13-15. Professor J. Hadot kindly gave me bibliographical information about Syriac literature.

¹⁷This is of course merely a pseudo-etymology, cf. Justi, Iranisches Namenbuch, 282-283.

¹⁸Movsēs Xorenac'i, 2. 36.

¹⁹H. Ačaṙyan, Hayeren armatakan baṙaran, (Erevan, 1979) 4. 264-265; M. Mayrhofer, Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen (Indogermanische Bibliothek, 2. R.; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1976) 3. 406: Skr. śvetāḥ, Av. spaēta-, O.-Sl. světŭ 'Licht.'

²⁰See the discussion by R. Schmitt, "Der 'Adler,'" Die Sprache 16 (1970) 63-77 and Ch. De Lamberterrie, "Armeniaca I-VIII," BSL 73 (1978) 253-262.

²¹R. Schmitt, "Der 'Adler,'" Die Sprache, 16 (1970) 67, n. 22.

²²Movsēs Xorenac'i 1.26.

²³De Natura animalium, 12, 21.

²⁴J. Mohl (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1976) (1838), 1, 31.

²⁵Mohl, 1, 353.

²⁶G. Widengren, "La legende royale de l'Iran antique," pp-pp, in Hommages à G. Dumézil (Collection Latomus, 45; Bruxelles, 1960) 225-237; Widengren, Les religions de l'Iran, 343-353.

²⁷E. Benveniste, "Une apocalypse pehlevie: le Žāmāsp-Nāmak," RHR 106 (1932) 337-380; A. Christensen, Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique (Paris, 1936) in particular 33-41, 107-140; Christensen, Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens (Stockholm, 1918, 1; Leiden, 1934, 2); A. Zajāczowski, "La composition et la formation historique de l'épopée iranienne (le Šāh-Nāme de Firdausi)," La Poesia epica e la sua formazione (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 139; Rome, 1970) 679-690: M. Boyce in Handbuch der Orientalistik

(4 B. Iranistik, 2, Absch. Literatur, 1, Lief.: Leiden, 1968), 57-60; E. Benveniste, "Le texte du Draxt Asūrīk et la versification pehlevie," *JA*, (1930) 193-225 and Benveniste, "Le mémorial de Zarēr. Poème pehlevi mazdéen," *JA*, (1932) 245-293.

Indeed, a popular Iranian epic literature must have existed since ancient times, but no direct trace of it has reached us. One reason for this is that Old-Persian cuneiform was only used for official inscriptions. This Medo-Persian folk-literature must have been kept in Aramean script, according to the general practice of that time, or orally, but in any case it is attested by ancient Greek authors, as Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*, 1, 2, 1). Moreover, there is, from the Avestan Yašts up to the *Šāh-Nāmeḥ*, a homogeneity in the transmission of epic themes, which implies the existence of Middle-Iranian epic. In Sasanian times, as far as we know, there was a royal chronicle, the *Xvāšyānāmā* 'The Book of Kings,' of which the Pahlavi original and the Arabic versions are lost, but which survive in a summary in various Arabic and Persian versions, ultimately leading to Firdausi's epic. The *Šāh-Nāmeḥ*, as well as the Pahlavi *Zamāsp Nāmāk*, undoubtedly have close connections with the *Zand i Vahman Yast*, which is the summary of a Pahlavi version of the lost Avestan *Vahman Yast* and, in spite of its recent date, it must proceed from the same Avestan pattern.

²⁸G. Widengren, *Les religions de l'Iran*, 301. Widengren, "La légende royale de l'Iran antique," 237, shows the close relation between the king and the third function through his rustic education, the second one in his activity as, for instance, a victorious fighter of the dragon. However, Widengren points out, the association of the king with the first function does not seem to have received such a marked mythic expression. The *xvarənah* and its representation under the form of an eagle would thus fill this empty post.

Nevertheless, G. Widengren himself, *Les religions de l'Iran*, 123, referring to K. Barr, *Fs. Hammerich*, 30-36, points out that the *xvarənah* is related to the first function. As mentioned above, in the legend of Zoroāstra's birth, it is said that his *xvarənah* his *fravahr* (*frauuāši*) and his *gōhr i tan* or *tan gōhr* (*gavaora*) are put together to constitute his personality: among these, the *fravahr* corresponds to the second function, the *gōhr i tan* to the third one and the *xvarr*, naturally, to the first one. About *gōhr*, see H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Ratanbai Katrak Lectures; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 83; G. Gnoli, "Un particolare aspetto del simbolismo della luce nel Mazdeismo e nel Mani-

cheismo," AION 12 (1962) n. 86.

²⁹Dēnkart, 2, 24-34.

³⁰Yt. 10. 10111.

³¹Dēnkart, 7. 25.

³²Dēnkart, 7. 24-34. M. Molé, La légende de Zoroastre selon les textes pehlevi (Travaux de l'Institut d'Etudes Iraniennes de l'Université de Paris, 3; Paris: Klincksieck, 1967).

³³Dēnkart, 7. 47-52.

³⁴M. Mokri, Le chasseur de Dieu et le mythe du Roi-Aigle (Dawra-y Dāmyārī) (Wiesbaden, 1967), 36, relates many traditions about the eagle. Among them, the custom of the bāz-parānī 'throwing of an eagle' when a king died without children, the people let a bird fly away and the person on the head of whom the bird settled three times was chosen to be the new king.

³⁵A. Christensen, Les gestes des rois, 78-83.

³⁶Yt. 19. 28-29.

³⁷A. Christensen, Les types du premier homme, 1. 213-215.

³⁸Yt. 14. 36, 38.

³⁹Mohl, 2, 45.

⁴⁰Agat'angelos, §735.

⁴¹A. Hultgård, "Change and Continuity in the Religion of Ancient Armenia with particular reference to the Vision of St. Gregory (Agathangelos §§731-755)", Classical Armenian Culture (ed. T. J. Samuelian; Univ. of PA Armenian Texts and Studies, 4; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 15.

⁴²Mohl, 4, 665.

⁴³Yt. 12. 17.

⁴⁴Bundahišn, 12.20.

⁴⁵Eznik, De Deo (ed. L. Mariès; Patrologia Orientalis, 28. 3-4; Paris, 1959) 2, 8, §188.

⁴⁶The etymology of siramarg is much disputed, but the second term of the compound certainly is the correspondent of Av. māraya, M.-Ir. mur : H. F. J. Junker, "Mittelpers. frašēmurv 'Pfau'," in Wörter und Sachen

(Heidelberg, 1929) 150, §12; Hübschmann, Armenische Grammatik, 237, no. 576; E. Liden, Armenische Studien (Goteborg, 1966) 49-50; H. W. Bailey, "Iranian in Armenian," REArm 2 (1965) 1; M. Leroy, 'Les emprunts iraniens dans les composés nominaux de l'arménien classique' REArm (forthcoming).

⁴⁷Christensen, Gestes des rois, 33-41; Christensen, Les types du premier homme, 2.54-55.

⁴⁸Hultgård, "Change and Continuity." The same conclusions are reached by J. Haudry for the Armenian epic, "La religion de la vérité dans l'épopée arménienne," Etudes Indo-Européennes 2 (1982) 1-21, and more accurately by B. L. Tchukasizian, "Echos de légendes épiques iraniennes dans les 'Lettres' de Grigor Magistros," REArm 1 (1964) 321-329.

⁴⁹F. Mawet, "'Light' in ancient Iranian," JIES 10 (1982).

⁵⁰Yt. 5.64.

⁵¹Yt. 10. 142.

⁵²G. Widengren, Les religions de l'Iran, 303.

⁵³Agat'angelos, §§ 731-755.

⁵⁴Agat'angelos, §735.